

Cohasset Mariner

The Mariner [and supplements] is a paid circulation newspaper published every Thursday at 541 Plain St., Marshfield, Mass. 02050 for and about the residents of Cohasset. Telephone 383-6321 or 837-3500. Mailing address: Box 71, Cohasset, Mass. 02025. Branch office at 22 Elm St., Cohasset, Mass. 02025. Second class postage paid at Marshfield, Mass. 02050.

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Editorial

Notes & Comment

Three things this week.

...First. The Cohasset Police Department has received more than its share of unfavorable publicity in recent weeks. This past week, however, the "ink" was glowing and justifiably so.

Under the direction of Lt. Charles Stockbridge, the department recovered art, televisions, money — you name it — that was collectively valued at more than \$250,000, making it one of the largest recovery of stolen goods in South Shore history.

The facts speak for themselves in this case. Good police work coupled with diligence and some luck solved a lot of crimes and let the light shine brightly on the Cohasset Police Department at the same time. If nothing else, it proves that infighting, squabbles and other turmoil that have nothing to do with solving crime don't have to interfere with the business of crime fighting.

A bouquet to Lt. Stockbridge and his men.

...Second. After ruminating over it for three to five seconds, we have decided not to adopt the editorial policies of Alfred Odermatt.

At a meeting of the School Committee this week, Mr. Odermatt gave the press a lesson on how to cover the news. Or how not to cover it. He called the Open Meeting Law — the one state statute that keeps local boards honest and accountable to the public — a deterrent to open discussion. It is as much a deterrent as the secret ballot box is a deterrent to Democracy.

In short, we couldn't disagree with you more Mr. Odermatt. The Open Meeting Law, despite the bruises it may inflict on timid officials, is meant to give the public — the people who pay the bills — a chance to know what decisions are made, how they are made and why they are made. It is also a tool of the press to better inform the public.

The days of public servants thinking they are know-it-all public savants are over. So, in this country, are oligarchies. Your suggestion that the press spend less time on how votes are made — soft news, you called it — would undo what small steps have been taken to open up the process of government. The better informed people are through vehicles like the Open Meeting Law, the better decisions they will make. And it is the people, the taxpayers, who will make the decisions.

...Finally, a comment on good taste.

Chester Magee is in the midst of a zoning battle with Zoning Officer James Litchfield over Magee's right to operate a business at his residentially-zoned home.

To emphasize his right to do what he pleases with his property, Mr. Magee has chosen to use different vehicles of protest. But last Thursday he went too far. Last Thursday he chose to fly a swastika — a hate symbol if there ever was one — over his property, thereby thumbing his nose at Mr. Litchfield and all Cohasset as well.

Legally, he may have been on solid ground. Morally he had nothing to stand on, and we believe his actions to be in the worst of taste.

(See related photos)



School Committee Airs Criticism In Executive Session

The School Committee, in a 90-minute closed door meeting, "aired the whole thing out" this week while considering discipline for and hearing charges against board members, according to Chairman Doris Golden.

Golden said that accusations against individual School Committee members had come from the school staff. There has been reported discord among committee members themselves as well as with the school administration and staff for some time.

Budget discussions have exacerbated the disagreements between the committee and Supt. John Maloney. A recent incident which involved committee members Patricia Walsh and John Langmaid and their apparent disregard of a vote not to photostat individual copies of budget back-up sheets, prompted Maloney to strongly reprimand the Committee for creating staff unrest and what he feared might result in the eventual undermining of the entire school system.

Alfred Odermatt of Todd Lane addressed the committee as soon as they returned to open session. He asked that his remarks be made off the record but was informed by the committee that the meeting was

open and public. Therefore they couldn't comply with his request. He then agreed to speak but asked the press to especially mark his words.

Odermatt said that the press "should take a hard look" at the way they cover School Committee meetings. The open meeting law, he said, has been a deterrent to open discussion, and that during budget time this inhibition results, not unnatu-

rally, in frustration.

The news media, he continued, should recognize the position the open meeting law puts the School Committee, and should concentrate not so much on the discussion leading to a vote.

Rather, he said, the press should report on the votes and the results of the board's actions or "the harder news," not "the lesser news."

Mahoney To Resign School Committee Seat

The School Committee unanimously accepted with regret the resignation of Vice-Chairman Josephine Mahoney.

Mahoney's resignation will be effective April 14, one year shy of the completion of her second term on the committee. She plans to step down because of personal reasons.

Chairman Doris Golden said that the evening didn't contain enough time to enumerate Mrs. Ma-

honey's qualities. "It has been great to have had her on the board these past five years," Golden said. "She has never complained. It will be a great loss. We're going to miss you."

Supt. John Maloney praised Mahoney's voting record, which he said, has always been in support of programs for the youths of Cohasset.

"This is a sad day for all of us," he said.

Librarians Win Salary Increase

The School Committee voted Monday night to increase the salaries of two library personnel, librarian Ronna Bingham and audiovisual aide Robert Gohl.

Mrs. Bingham had been planning to resign from her position in Cohasset which she has held since September to accept a comparable job in Scituate for more pay and a shorter work year. She expressed a desire to remain at her present post but requested that her salary be increased to \$14,000 and her vacation lengthened by two weeks to make her stay worthwhile.

Supt. John Maloney spoke in support of Mrs. Bingham's recommendations and said that he had, in fact, asked her what he could do so that she would be willing to stay. Maloney said that the library program had experienced a renaissance since Mrs. Bingham's arrival in the fall. Her master's degree and six years of background in library services, he said, should earn her a higher salary than her present \$12,000 which does not come under the teacher's contract.

Audio-visual aide Gohl will also receive a salary increase to \$8,500 for his half-time position for which he is now paid \$7,000. During the library budget discussion, it was noted that Gohl spends many unrequired night time hours recording programs as part of the video services offered to school children.

The Committee also discussed the music, social studies and English departments budgets. Most of the

budget increases were attributed to teachers' salaried increments for the next school year and to textbook and media costs.

Ron Emmons, Chairman of the English Department, defended the use of video tapes in the teaching of literature to aid students reluctant to read. Emmons said that with video equipment he could ensure that all students would get a chance to see a

program that might otherwise only be viewed on television or in the theatre. He maintained that plays, especially those of Shakespeare were meant to be seen and heard, not just read.

Gohl further emphasized the importance of a well stocked video library. He said he is trying to accumulate a video library and wants to develop a collaborative in the near future with Hingham and Scituate.



Meet Mr. Magee